

TURF SCHOOLED

With economic impacts still lingering in the golf industry, superintendents are gently dissuading their kids from following their lead.

BY BETH GERACI

Scott Ramsay, CGCS at Yale Golf Course in New Haven, Conn., is with his son, making the long drive to the University of South Carolina, where his son is a senior.

"What would I say? Good luck," says Ramsay. "My optimism of the industry is a bit strained, but still strong."

If it were the 1990s, it would be a different story, says Ramsay, who's worked in greenkeeping for 30 years. But it's not the '90s. And though his son, 23, was Ramsay's intern on the course last summer, his degree won't be in turf.

"It's going to be pretty tough in this business for the next four or five years," Ramsay says. "That being said, it's like every industry."

As Ramsay's telling his son "Good luck," Rob Daniel, CGCS at Rivertowne Country Club in Mt. Pleasant, S.C., is telling his kids, "Go to law school." "No," he adds, "I would support my kids in whatever they wanted to do. But I think it's going to be increasingly difficult to break into the industry, because it's a shrinking industry."

Daniel, 34, is father to a 4-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son. When it comes time for them to enter the work force, Daniel will encourage them to pursue a field that offers a broader range of opportunities than golf course management does.

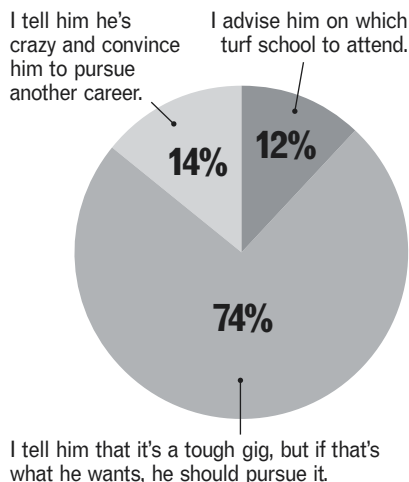
"As soon as they come out of college, it would be an extremely difficult road to get to the superintendent positions," Daniel says. "There are exceptions to everything, but it's just a difficult task. I wouldn't want my kids to become stuck in an industry."

Dave Davies, CGCS at TPC Stonebrae in Hayward, Calif., is right there with him.

"I have advised all four of my kids to try to experience a wider range of disciplines," says Davies, whose degree is in business administration, not in turf. "If something lights a fire for you, pursue it. But I think a broad-based education is so much more important, because you learn so many more skills, so many different talents."

There is "a glut" of trained individuals in the 25 to 40 age bracket searching for superintendent positions, Davies says, and that means there are a lot of people

YOUR SON SAYS HE WANTS TO GO TO TURF SCHOOL SO HE CAN BE JUST LIKE YOU. WHAT DO YOU SAY?



with specialized skills who are competing for a limited number of jobs.

"How would I feel if I spent four years focusing on one area and then had to take a job as a spray tech out of college when my focus is on being a superintendent? Not good," he says.

But Chris Vincent, superintendent at The Reserve at Lake Keowee in Sunset, S.C., sees ample opportunity in this business, even down the road for his two young girls.

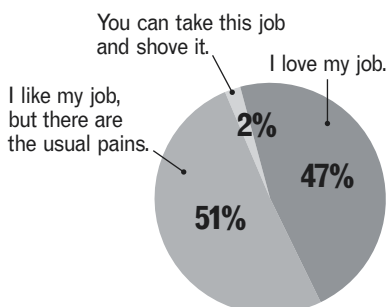
"If they wanted to follow in my footsteps, I would encourage them," Vincent says. "The game of golf these days is continuing to advance, and I think women in the profession have an advantage, because... you tend to pay more attention to what they're doing."

With the business skills and product knowledge superintendents develop, Vincent asserts they definitely have job options in turf outside of greenkeeping, such as club general manager, sales and marketer.

Vincent will support his daughters in whatever they decide to do. "As long as my kids are loving what they do, that's all I care about it," he says. "And if they enjoy being a superintendent, even better."

Continued on page 30

DO YOU LIKE YOUR JOB?



WHAT WERE ROUNDS PLAYED LIKE AT YOUR COURSE IN 2012?

